

Copy of Correspondence between the Chief Secretary for Ireland and the Hon. Mr. Justice O'Hagan, relative to the Circumstances attending the Publication of a Pamphlet entitled "How to become the Owner of your Farm."

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

SIR,

Irish Office, 7th February 1882.

My attention has been drawn to a pamphlet entitled "How to become the Owner of your Farm," printed at the Queen's Printing Office for Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

I am informed by Mr. Godley, the Secretary to the Land Commission, that he authorised the printing of this pamphlet and the payment for its printing out of the funds at the disposal of the Commission.

He also informs me that he took this step in the belief that this pamphlet merely contained useful suggestions with regard to the working of Part V. of the Land Act, and in ignorance of there being passages in it which imply approval of the action of the Land League, and which at any rate are of a partisan character.

Mr. Godley also tells me that neither you nor your colleagues were previously informed of the purchase and publication, and that upon your attention being called to it its circulation was stopped and the copies on hand destroyed.

As, however, the Commissioners are responsible for the acts of the gentlemen they employ, I think I cannot avoid asking you officially what steps you have taken or intend to take in the matter.

Mr. Justice O'Hagan,
Irish Land Commission.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. E. FORSTER.

24, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin.
8th February 1882.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant with reference to a pamphlet entitled "How to become the Owner of your Farm," printed in Dublin at the Queen's Printing Office for Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

We had before the receipt of your letter called on Mr. Fottrell, the Solicitor to the Commission, to furnish us with a statement in writing of the circumstances under which that pamphlet was printed and published.

He has furnished us with a statement, which I enclose.

None of the Commissioners was aware of the existence of the pamphlet until the evening of Friday, the 20th January. On that evening, as I was leaving Merrion Street, Mr. Fottrell mentioned to me, as he had shortly before done to Mr. Litton, that a pamphlet on the subject of the purchase by

tenants of their farms had been printed at the office of the "Freeman's Journal," and that in the belief that its circulation would tend to forward the working of Part V. of the Act, he had applied to Mr. Godley for an order to the Stationery Office for the purchase of 2,000 copies. He said that the Stationery Office instead of purchasing the copies had reprinted them, and he asked me to look over the pamphlet. I took a copy with me and saw that it contained at the beginning some passages of a partisan character, rendering it very unfit to emanate from this Commission, or to be circulated by its means. Accordingly, on the next morning, immediately on going to the office, I spoke to Mr. Godley and learned from him how the matter had taken place, so far as he was concerned. I then sent for Mr. Pottrell, and expressed to both my strong sense of the impropriety of publishing or circulating in any form a publication containing passages such as are contained in the beginning of this pamphlet, adding that I could not draw any distinction between the distribution of purchased copies and that of reprinted ones. I spoke of the necessity of consulting the Commissioners and obtaining their sanction to any act by which the Commission would be bound. I then inquired as to the number of copies already issued, and learned that they were comparatively few, and had been sent only to our Assistant Commissioners.

I immediately directed that they should be recalled, and any further issue of copies absolutely prohibited.

This was done, and I enclose a copy of the minute which was made.

It will be seen that Mr. Pottrell has placed his resignation in our hands, and we have it at present under consideration.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN O'HAGAN.

The Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P.,
 &c. &c. &c.

COPY OF MINUTE.

21st January 1882.

Ordered that the pamphlet entitled "How to become the Owner of your Farm," which has been brought under the notice of the Commissioners for the first time to-day, be withdrawn from circulation, and that any copies in the possession of officers of the Commission be destroyed.

REPORT to the IRISH LAND COMMISSIONERS from their SOLICITOR in reference to the REPRINTING of the PAMPHLET entitled "HOW TO BECOME THE OWNER OF YOUR FARM."

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with your request I beg to give you the following report of the circumstances under which the pamphlet came to be printed by the Stationery Office.

The document which is not strictly speaking a pamphlet, but a collection of articles which appeared in the "Freeman's Journal" newspaper, was published by that journal in pamphlet form, and the proprietor sent me a few copies unofficially. I annex one of them.

A short time after I received them I gave a few copies to some gentlemen who called on me here in reference to selling their estates to their tenants, and I found that they regarded the pamphlet as useful, and asked where copies could be obtained so that they might be sent to the tenants in order that the latter might clearly understand the advantages of purchasing their holdings and how the purchase could be carried out.

On finding this, I suggested to your Secretary, Mr. Godley, that it might be useful to purchase some copies of the pamphlet in order that I might send them to tenants on estates about the sale of which inquiries might be made in my department, and for the distribution among landlords and tenants wherever I saw that the working of the purchase clauses might be assisted thereby.

Mr. Godley unfortunately placed too much reliance on my judgment, and without reading the document gave an order for its purchase to the Stationery Office, through which I understand all such purchases should be made.

Some weeks subsequently the Stationery Clerk of the Land Commission in answer to inquiry whether the pamphlet had been purchased informed me that the Stationery Office in Dublin having forwarded to the Stationery Office, London, the order for the purchase, together with a quotation from the "Freeman's Journal" manager of the price, had received a notification from the London Stationery Office to the effect that it would be cheaper to reprint the pamphlet than purchase it at the newspaper office, and accordingly the reprint was then made and the copies furnished to this office early in January.

Some copies were sent down by me to each Sub-Commission. On the 20th January I observed for the first time that at the end of the pamphlet so reprinted was the imprint—

"Dublin: Printed by Alex. Thom and Co., 87, 88, 89, Abbey Street. The Queen's Printing Office. For Her Majesty's Stationery Office."

and on the return of the Commissioners from Belfast that day I called the attention of Judge O'Hagan to the fact. I then learned that the Commissioners had not up to that time read the pamphlet at all, or heard of its having been ordered, and I gave a copy to Judge O'Hagan to take home with him to peruse, and on the next morning, 21st January 1882, he told me that he considered the pamphlet should be at once cancelled, and so far as was possible recalled, and therefore the following minute was made by the Commissioners.

"21st January 1882.

"Ordered that the pamphlet 'How to become the Owner of your Farm,' which has been brought under the notice of the Commissioners for the first time to-day, be withdrawn from circulation, and that any copies in the possession of the officers of the Commission be destroyed."

Letters were at once sent to all the Sub-Commissioners to return forthwith all copies remaining on hand, so that they might be cancelled, and since the date of the minute no copy of the pamphlet has been allowed into circulation in any way.

I desire to say that in suggesting to the Secretary the desirability of purchasing the pamphlets, I had but one object in view, namely, the bringing home to the landlords and tenants the advantages of availing themselves of the purchase clauses of the Act.

I regret extremely the annoyance which my action in the matter has brought upon you, and I beg to place in your hands my resignation of the appointment which I hold in the Irish Land Commission.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GEO. FOTHERILL,
JUR.

LONDON :

Printed by GEORGE E. ERNE and WILLIAM SPOTTISWOOD,
Printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty,
For Her Majesty's Stationery Office.